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SUBJECT: KUWAITI CHARITABLE DONATIONS FOR TSUNAMI VICTIMS
MOUNT

REF: A. KUWAIT 128

[1](#)B. KUWAIT 73

[1](#)1. Following a slow start and feeling the sting of accusations that it has been stingy toward countries hit hard by last month's tsunami, Kuwait has dramatically upped its assistance pledges this week (Ref A). In addition to the \$100 million promised by the Government of Kuwait (GOK) on January 9 (\$30 million in cash, \$70 for infrastructure projects), the government announced on January 11 that the Amir would contribute \$5 million of his personal fortune to tsunami victims, while the Crown Prince would donate \$2

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million and the Prime Minister \$1 million in an effort to galvanize public donations. One contact said that the GOK was, in a sense, shamed into giving more after contributions started pouring in around the world from both governments and private individuals, specifically mentioning race-car driver Michael Schumacher's \$10 million donation, which was equivalent to Kuwait's January 2 pledge (ref B).

[1](#)2. Among non-governmental organizations, the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KCRS) has taken the lead, sending an eight-person relief team to Sri Lanka. The team delivered a total of 29,281 tons of medical supplies, blankets and provisions to Sri Lanka between December 28 and January 1, and its efforts are ongoing. Private giving is increasing as well: local media reported that because numerous Kuwaitis have asked to donate the 200 KD (almost \$700) "Amiri grant" that each citizen received in late 2004, the Awqaf General Assembly has opened tsunami relief accounts in all Kuwaiti banks. In addition, the National Bank of Kuwait has opened a separate special account for credit card, ATM and online contributions, and mobile telephone company MTC-Vodafone is donating 1 KD (about \$3.40) to KCRS each time someone sends MTC the letter "T" as a text message. Finally, the Ministries of Information and Social Affairs and Labor, in coordination with the cabinet, will be organizing a "Charity Day" on January 16 to encourage further charitable giving.

[1](#)3. On January 11, Econoff spoke to Osama Al-Attal, Director of Disbursement for the Kuwait Fund for Arab and Economic Development (KFAED), which will administer the \$70 million pledged by the GOK for rebuilding infrastructure. Al-Attal said that KFAED will delay disbursements until the UN, World Bank or some other international body indicates that the cleanup efforts have been completed and rebuilding can begin. Al-Attal did not have a time estimate, but thought it likely that some rebuilding projects might not start for a year. He said that the Kuwait Fund would most likely focus its financing on housing and water systems reconstruction, but would wait to see what the specific needs are. According to Al-Attal, many questions about how best to target the aid still remain (noting that if, as reported, so many families were completely destroyed, it was unclear who would need rebuilt housing).

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